

Full-time or Part-Time Councillors?

There is a perception that the workload of councillors has been steadily increasing as the complexity of government activity and the expectations of residents have increased. The Ontario *Municipal Act* makes no legal distinction between full-time and part-time councillors. A councillor is a councillor and each one has the same powers and duties regardless of the amount of time spent at the job. The difference between full-time and part-time is a matter of the level of pay and the accompanying expectations.

Table 1 indicates that at present in Ontario, councillors in only three single-tier cities receive what would be considered full-time compensation: Toronto, Ottawa and Hamilton. In some regions, councillors serve on both regional and area municipal councils, each of which treats them as part time. When payments from both levels are combined, however, it adds up to the equivalent of full-time compensation.

Table 1
Councillor Compensation
Select Ontario Regions and Area Municipalities

Municipality	Population 2016	Annual Compensation (\$)	
		Single-tier municipality	
Toronto	2,731,571	117,164 ₁	
Ottawa	934,243	105,684 ₁	
Hamilton	536,917	97,357 ₂	
London	383,822	33,337 ₃	
Windsor	217,188	45,748 ₁	
Sudbury	161,531	38,734 ₇	
Barrie	141,434	32,125 ₂	
Guelph	131,794	41,528 ₄	
Kingston	123,798	40,000 ₂	
Thunder Bay	107,909	30,672 ₈	
Chatham-Kent	101,647	32,000 ₁	

Municipality	Population 2016	Annual Compensation (\$)		
		Area municipality	Upper-tier	Total
Caledon	66,502	37,234 ₂	55,957 ₂	93,191
Mississauga	721,599	82,831	55,957 ₂	138,788
Vaughan	306,233	78,953 ₃	55,955 ₃	134,908
Oshawa	159,458	27,110 ₆	54,694 ₂	81,804
Pickering	91,771	35,317 ₂	54,694 ₂	90,011
Burlington	183,314	56,796 ₂	51,026 ₂	107,822
		Area municipality	Upper-tier	
Waterloo (City)	104,986	28,892 ₅	43,731 ₂	
St. Catharines	133,113	21,029 ₂	30,204 ₄	
1 – Effective 2019 2 – 2018 3 – 2017 4 – 2020 5 – 2018, 1/3 is non-taxable 6 – 2017, 1/3 is non-taxable 7 – Average of remuneration of councillors in 2018. This includes compensation of work on council and committee(s) 8 – Base salary effective 2019 but before additional pay from sitting on outside boards (average \$2,650 in 2018)				
Population – 2016 Statistics Canada Census Compensation – various websites				

Table 2 shows the results of a survey conducted as a part of this Study. It indicates that current Guelph councillors say that they spend an average of about 20 hours per week on Council business. This is less than typical full-time employment, but it uses up so much time that it is difficult to see how a councillor could seek other full-time employment or even pursue a regular, fixed-schedule part-time job.

Furthermore, the average disguises that the fact that the number of hours can vary significantly from week to week with little or no warning. Some variations are predictable; budget time requires a commitment of a major block of time. However, crises or dealing with constituents' issues are totally unpredictable, but can require a great deal of time. Fitting a regular full-time job or even a traditional part-time job

with regular hours around the significant and irregular time commitments of a councillor would be very difficult.

Table 2
Time Commitment to Council Activities
(hours per month)

Question	Number who Responded	Range	Average
Approximately how many hours do you spend attending meetings of Council and Committee of the Whole in an average month?	11	10-24 hours	17 hours
Approximately how many hours do you spend reading and preparing for Council and Committee of the Whole meetings in an average month?	11	5-34 hours	15.27 hours
Approximately how many hours do you spend attending other meetings of committees directly related to the City of Guelph (Police Services Board, Conservation Authority, etc.) in an average month?	11	1-13.5 hours	5.64 hours
Approximately how many hours do you spend meeting with constituents (including meeting with staff and others to deal with constituent issues) in an average month?	10	4-20 hours	10.5 hours
Approximately how many hours do you spend meeting with other councillors and staff to deal with internal City issues in an average month?	11	2-10 hours	4.05 hours
Approximately how many hours do you spend on activities related to municipal issues beyond the scope of the City of Guelph (AMO, FCM, etc.) in an average month?	9	1-10 hours	3.33 hours
Approximately how much time do you spend on Council related work not listed above in an average month? Please identify the type of activity and the hours spent.	9	4-54.4 hours	18.93 hours
Total time on direct Council business	8	35-135.4 hours	78.36* hours

Question	Number who Responded	Range	Average
Approximately how much time do you spend on service with other community groups not directly related to City of Guelph business, but that are important for your role as councillor (service clubs, recreation associations, faith-based organizations, etc.) in an average month? If you're comfortable, please also provide examples of these organizations?	11	2-29 hours	9.64 hours
Total time on community and Council activity	8	39.5-143.4	85.68* hours
Do you have full-time or part-time employment in addition to your role as a councillor? If so, how much time do you spend on that employment in an average month?	9	0-200	57.44
On average, how many constituent emails do you receive weekly?	10	10-50	24.45
On average, how many constituent telephone calls do you receive weekly?	11	0-10	3.73

*Averages include only data from councillors who responded to all questions

The opportunity to serve on municipal council should be open to anyone who meets the qualifications of citizenship, residence, and age. Working conditions and rates of pay should not be established in a manner that prevents some people from serving on council. However, individuals who make the commitment to serve as local elected officials should be able to expect fair and reasonable compensation.

On the current Guelph Council, several councillors are retired and can spend almost full-time hours on their Council activities. Other councillors are entrepreneurs or have freelance employment that allows them to control their own hours. Only two councillors have full-time employment and one explained that their employer was understanding of the role of councillor and allowed them flexible hours.

Guelph councillors seem to have arrived at the difficult position where their workload as a councillor is not really full-time in terms of the hours involved, but it is so time-consuming and wide-ranging that it restricts their ability to pursue supplementary conventional 9-to-5 types of employment.

Moving from part-time to full-time councillors does not necessarily involve a large increase in expenditure. Precise recommendations about compensation are a part of

Phase 3 of this study, but if we assume at this point that compensation for each councillor was increased from \$40,000 to \$80,000 per year and the number of councillors remained the same, that would involve an increase of \$480,000 on a total City operating budget of \$256 million.

Alternatively, if the number of councillors were cut in half and their compensation doubled, then there would be no increase in expenditure on councillors' compensation.

In addition to direct compensation to councillors, full-time councillors would expect offices at City Hall which would involve some one-time costs for renovation. Full-time councillors would also likely want some full-time office assistance. One or two staff members could be added at a total cost of compensation and related expenses of approximately \$100,000 per staff member.

There would be some additional cost in accepting this idea, but residents of Guelph need to decide if they want to continue the status quo which restricts the type of people who can afford to make themselves available to run for office and forces people to make sacrifices to become a councillor or whether they want to compensate councillors at a full-time wage so that they can concentrate primarily on their Council responsibilities.